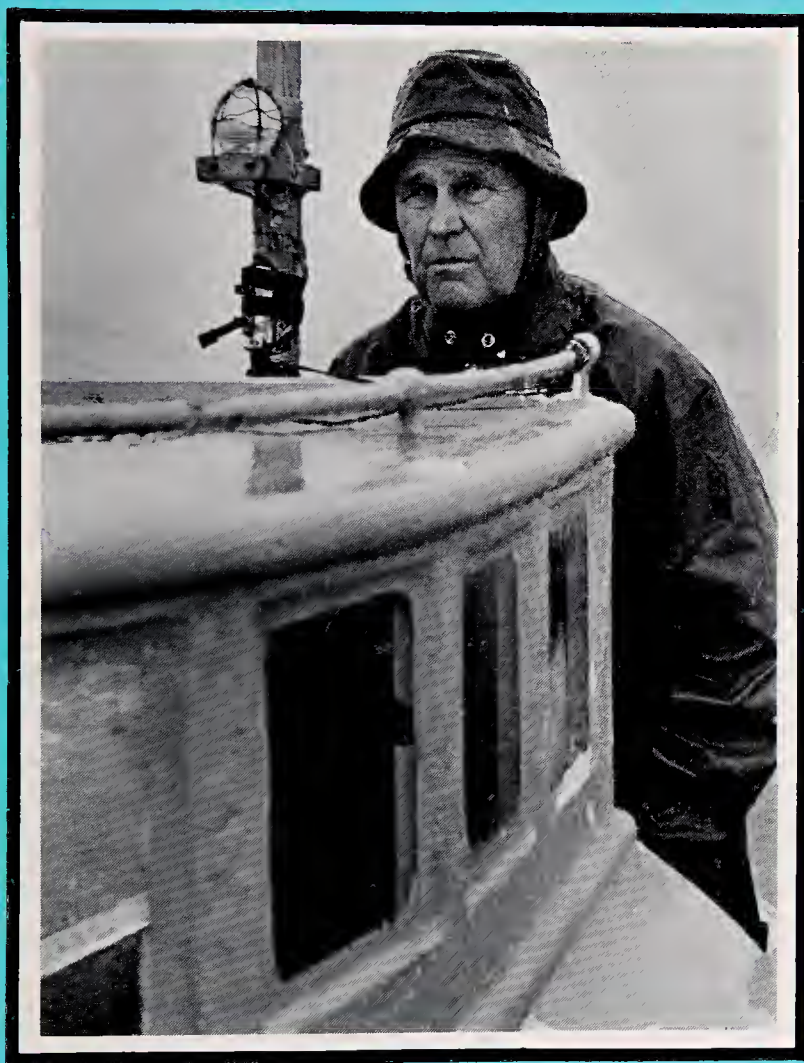


CUMTUX



*Bill Puustinen
Gillnetting on the Columbia*

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

When we were kids living up in Astor Court back in the Thirties, many of our best daily adventures took place down on the Ole Erickson property. We caught crawfish and little trout in the stream which ran through their property, and wandered through their arboretum, seeing for the first time rare trees and plants from all parts of the world. And, we are ashamed to admit, we regularly stole delicious plums from a huge plum tree which had the misfortune to be planted near the road we used. So, when Evelyn Leahy Hankel brought in the Ole Erickson story, we were nostalgically delighted, and have featured it in this issue of Cumtux. The name of Erickson has long been synonymous with the florist business in Astoria for more years than we can count and here for the first time our readers will get an opportunity to read the real story of the Erickson family of Youngs Bay.

We have been trying for a long time to get personal stories of salmon fishing on the Columbia River without too much luck. Fishermen seem to be notoriously modest about their achievements. But now, finally, we have a first-hand account of what it was really like to go gillnetting on the river. We are indebted to Ed Niska for getting this story by W. Wm. Puustinen. "Schoolboy on the Columbia River" is well worth reading. And, as an added attraction, Hjordis Brown has written a short, poignant article about her father Axel Berg and his days of fishing and crabbing. Together, these two articles give us a real look at the dangers the fishermen face daily in their quest for the Columbia River salmon.

We have already featured one article on the Gearhart family (Cumtux, Vol. 3, No. 1) and now Marjorie Gearhart Boehm and Agnes Gearhart Garner have written an article on the life and times of their grandmother Celestia Ann Neal Gearhart, one of Astoria's all-time great citizens who lived to the wonderful old age of 104. We wish we could have published the entire story in this issue but due to the length of it, we were forced to publish the first half now and the final segment in the Autumn issue of Cumtux. We hope that you will enjoy the entire story as much as we have.

Finally, we wish to give credit to a skilled photographer James R. Larison who took the fabulous cover photo of W. Wm. Puustinen as well as the photograph on page 22 of Mr. Puustinen gillnetting. Our sincerest thanks to Mr. Larison for allowing us to use these two photographs in this issue of Cumtux.

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Cumtux - Chinook Jargon
To know . . . acknowledge . . . to inform

THE OLE ERICKSON FAMILY OF YOUNGS BAY

*The Erickson family by the old home and greenhouses.
Ole and Anna Erickson stand with children Gus,
Charlie, Olga, John, Victoria and Rudolph*



Photographs courtesy members of the Erickson family.

by Evelyn Leahy Hankel



From Sunne Varmland, Sweden came Ole Erickson, son of Erick Olson and brother to Nils Gustave, Christine and Britta. Leaving his homeland he had travelled to distant California in America. Ole had experience as an ice cutter and soon found work in the ice fields of Northern California. While visiting with friends in San Francisco he met Anna Louisa Maria Johnson, newly arrived from Sweden at the invitation of her brothers Gustave, Charles and Andrew Johnson. The Johnsons were orphaned when Anna was quite small and she was left in a foster home when the brothers left for America. They sent Anna passage money to join them in San Francisco and she made the long journey alone. The Johnson brothers found different trades in California. Andrew had a deep interest in horticulture and studied in San Francisco but soon departed for Oregon and set up greenhouses and opened Columbia Nursery and gardens on Young's Bay in Astoria. Gustave became a doorman for the famous St. Francis Hotel in downtown San Francisco, a position he held until the great earthquake and fire destroyed the hotel and Gustave's entire belongings. Charles worked at construction and carpentry and remained in California. None of Anna's brothers married.

Anna and Ole Erickson were united in marriage in San Francisco April 27, 1890 and began housekeeping, moving from the towns of Boca, Truckee to Floristan in Nevada County, CA. following the ice cutting business. In these small towns the first four Erickson

children were born, Gustave Adolph (Gus) in 1891, Charles Oscar in 1893, Olga Louise (Schairer) in 1895 and John William in 1897. With this growing family Ole and Anna decided to join Andrew Johnson in Oregon as Anna, too, had an interest in plants and flowers.

Andrew had become well known in Oregon as a botanist and later was appointed the first Oregon State Forester. His numerous papers on the description of different plants and trees of Oregon were read at national and state expositions. He became a close friend and colleague of Luther Burbank, the renowned botanist, who came to Astoria to visit

Andrew's Columbia Nursery and gardens.

Ole and Anna and their four children moved in with Andrew until a larger house was built on the acreage in Judge Taylor's section of Astoria. In later years the house was moved to make way for the building of Astoria High School. Here on Young's Bay were spent many happy years by the Erickson family, who all developed the talent and love for "growing things." Here, too, came more little ones to join the family with the total score an even dozen. Victoria Marie (Link), Albert, Rudolph Victor, Annie Lena Christina



Anna Johnson and Ole Erickson's wedding photographs.

(Smith), Esther Martha (Walman), Freida Stella Charity (Hulen), her twin brother, Fred and Rose Lily Elizabeth (Speke). It would seem Anna and Ole Erickson enjoyed naming their children often endowing them with three names.

Tragedy struck into the heart of the family one Saturday morning when the sixth child, Albert, but two and a half years old, disappeared. A search began with an estimated one thousand volunteers led by the Sheriff's Department but never a trace was found. As far as San Francisco the police were alerted and incoming ships from the

North were searched. The family have always believed that Albert was kidnapped though many stories grew, unfounded, concerning his disappearance. More sorrow hit the family later when Frieda's twin, Fred, did not survive infancy. The remaining ten children grew to adulthood and all became well-known florists in the Astoria area.

The Columbia Nursery gardens and greenhouses became renowned in the setting on Young's Bay. Visitors roamed the gardens on Sunday afternoons enjoying the blooms of plants never before grown in the Northwest. When Gus was old enough to manage it a shop was opened and Erickson Florist Company came into being on Bond Street between 11th and 12th Streets. As the children grew to their teens each one helped Gus in the shop.

The Ericksons began their early life deeply involved in the work around the nursery. Children did weeding every day after school. Neighbor children often helped so that Ericksons would have more time to play. Every Saturday night Ole paid each child 25¢ allowance which was then put into a bank for the Astoria Regatta celebration, the big holiday of the year, when each Erickson child had 50¢ a day to spend as she or he chose.

School was an important part of life for all Erickson children and each went on to Astoria high school from the small grade schools in the Astoria area. The older children began at the little Olney school located at 2nd and Astor in Astoria and walked around Smith Point to school and back each day carrying books and lunch pail. After McClure school opened its doors in 1901 on Eighth street the younger children began school there, still a long walk from home. At McClure the grades were located on the first two floors of the four story building with the high school on the third floor and a science depart-



San Francisco April 27, 1890

ment on the fourth floor. All high school students attended here until 1911 when Astoria high school on Jerome street was completed.

While the children were about their education Ole and Anna kept the Nursery blooming. "Mother loved flowers," all the daughters agree today, "and she could always be found in the greenhouse after housework and care of the children was finished each day." Anna also had a deep sense of civic pride in America and in her Swedish heritage. She was an active member of Charity Lodge of Odd-fellows. Anna Erickson and Mrs. Thomas Nelson started the First Christian Church in Astoria by inviting the first minister to begin the church here. Ole was content to work and improve the nursery and from ASTORIAN DAILY BUDGET of 1908 comes the note that Mr. Ole Erickson sent a shipment of forest moss to the Hawaiian Islands

and presented many trees and shrubs for the City Park in Astoria. In 1912 Ole became a citizen of the United States officially.

Andrew Johnson died suddenly of pneumonia while yet in middle age leaving the Ericksons to carry on the well-established nursery business.

Ole and Anna Erickson lived long contented lives in Oregon. Anna was the first to go after seeing her children married and a dozen grandchildren growing up around her. She passed away October 13, 1947 leaving Ole with the family a few more years. Anna was 83 years old and Ole celebrated his 90th birthday with a party given by the children where his many Astoria friends honored him. He lived to be 91 years before joining Anna.

The Erickson Floral Company prospered until the great Astoria Fire in 1922 took its toll. Gus had opened the shop on 16th and Commercial Streets

The Erickson home in Sunne Varmland, Sweden



before serving his country in World War I. The shop was in the direct path of the fire as it swept down Commercial Street. Foard and Stokes next door was burning and it was necessary to dynamite Erickson's store to keep the fire from St. Mary's Hospital just one block away. After the fire, Gus and Charlie opened a small shop in Lovell's Arcade until Commercial Street buildings were completed. The first Erickson Floral Shop after the fire was between 10th and 11th Streets where Utzingers Book Store is today. A move was then made to the Liberty Theatre block where the Health Store is located then into what was Rebe's Confectionery and finally in 1942 to its present location, the ideal place for display and customer convenience.

All four boys became florists and Johnny and Rudy branched off to their own shops with the help of their sisters Annie who worked with Charlie for 51 years and Esther with Johnny in the Astoria Florists.

World War I in 1917 took Gus and Charlie away for the duration. In France Gus was able to continue his career as head of army gardens which raised vegetables for the troops in Versailles, France. While stationed in Versailles he wrote a letter to his sister Olga which was a front page story in the MORNING ASTORIAN of November 22, 1917.

GUSTAVE ADOLPH ERICKSON

Promoted to Lieutenant, Gus was given an office in Versailles with French personnel to assist him. A pretty young French girl, Yvonne Tabourie was his assistant and as each was anxious to learn the other language they studied together. Soon love prevailed and Yvonne took Lt. Erickson home to meet her family in Versailles. Mr. Tabourie was an architect but was at the time a Lieutenant in the French Army. From THE MORNING ASTORIAN



Olga, age 4, and Victoria in 1899

Esther Erickson with baby Freida





Ole Erickson.

of Jan. 7, 1919 this description of the wartime wedding — “A very pretty wedding united Lt. Gustave Erickson of this city with Miss Yvonne Tabourie of Versailles. The Bride’s parents Lt. and Mrs. C. Tabourie live in Versailles where the wedding was held. The Bride wore deep blue velvet with a toque to match and carried a wonderful bouquet of Carnations, Narcissus and Orange Blossoms. Harry Fuller was Best Man. The couple left for a Paris honeymoon and will return to Versailles where Lt. Erickson is stationed as head of Army Gardens.

After the war, Gus and Yvonne came to Astoria and Gus resumed managing the Erickson Floral Company shop. They remained here about eight years during which time their first child, Genevieve (Ginette) was born. Wishing to return to France, Gus applied for a position in the American Embassy in Paris and was accepted. Daughter Jacquelyn (Jackie) was born in Versailles and the family remained in France but visited relatives many times through the years that followed. Gus was struck down by an auto driven by a young man as he stood in a pedestrian lane outside his Versailles apartment house June 19, 1970. Yvonne lived on with her daughters until 1984. The two daughters with their families live in Versailles.

CHARLES OSCAR ERICKSON

Charlie Erickson was a long time Astoria florist. He was born in Floristan, California and came to Astoria as a child. He attended Astoria schools and joined Gus in the floral shop at an early age. Charlie followed his brother into the Army during World War I joining the 3rd Oregon Infantry at Portland March 31, 1917. After the war he joined Gus in the Erickson Floral shop and when Gus returned to France Charlie became manager. During his many years in Astoria Charlie was prominent as a businessman. He joined many civic organizations and groups promoting Astoria. He never married and his shop was his total life. Charlie lived to the age of 83 years and passed away in 1973.

OLGA LOUISE ERICKSON SCHAIRER

The first daughter born to Ole and Anna, attended Olney school, McClure school and graduated from Astoria High School in the first business course offered by the school and the only one in the class to finish the Course. Olga’s first job after high school graduation was in the office of Charlie Brown’s

shoe store on Commercial street. Often in busy times at Erickson's, Olga would spend the day helping and with her office experience kept the account books for Charlie.

A young man from Philadelphia, Ludwig Schairer (Louis) came to town by way of White Salmon, Washington. Louis Schairer (pronounced Shirer by some of the family) was an accountant and was working at Fisher Bros. when he and Olga met. Later he worked for the U.S. Bank and as a CPA did tax

returns. During World War II, Louis became well-known at Astoria Marine Shipyards as chief accountant, where he continued to work until he was eighty years old.

Olga and Louis were married in St. Mary's Church by the Rev. John Waters, Sept. 10, 1919. Their first address was Mrs. Clara Hobson's home on 9th and Franklin while they awaited completion of their new home on 6th Street where Olga lives today and has lived for 65 years. Olga assisted Louis

The old Erickson home near Youngs Bay located about where Astoria high school is today. Ole and Ann Erickson stand on the front porch with their six children about 1900.



in his work doing all the typing for him. She worked in the office of the Girl Scouts in Astoria for many years and also for the Red Cross. Her daughters referred to her as "Number One Volunteer" as she was always responding to calls for help, working with Astoria Garden Club of which she was a charter member, her church organiza-

tions and civic affairs.

The Schairer home welcomed six children including two sets of twins. All children attended Star of the Sea Grade and High School. They are John and Mary (first twins), Frances, Arthur and Agnes and Ann (second set of twins). A short history of Schairer children is here recorded.

Olga and Rudy on the steps of the old Erickson homestead with one of the greenhouses in the background



John Louis and Marylou Pierce Schairer

The John Schairers live in Portland where John, like his father, has spent many years as an accountant and Marylou as a registered nurse. After service in World War II, John was affiliated with Hoffman Construction Company. Their children are:

1) Pamela Schairer Cach and Robert Cach who have one son Brian Cach.

2) Jeanne Schairer Skellenger and William Skellenger have two sons, Jeffrey and Tim.

3) John Pierce Schairer (at home)

Mary Elizabeth Schairer Swingle

Mary worked in the quartermaster Office at Fort Stevens during World War II. Here she met Claude Victor Swingle of Salem, Oregon serving in the coast artillery. After the war, Claude was in the heavy equipment business and has had his own business in The Dalles for the past 25 years. He and Mary have a motel in Ocean Park, WA., so spend their time between the two places. Mary has an art materials shop in The Dalles where she teaches art forms and is an artist of Tole, water-color and oil. Some of her lovely still lifes hang in her mother's home.

The Swingle family consists of:

1) Robert Louis Swingle whose wife Mary Knutsen Swingle is an Astorian also. Rob and Mary live in San Diego, CA. with their two children Michael and Molly.

2) Claudia Swingle Jeffers and James Jeffers live in Portland with James' two children, James Jr. and Lisa Jeffers and Claudia and James' daughter, Aimie.

Frances Evelyn Schairer Duffy married Joseph James Duffy, captain in air force World War II veteran (1913-1972). Frances met Joe while working in Everett, WA. He was sent overseas shortly after their marriage. They have four children including one set of twins.

The Duffy's lost husband and father Joe in 1972.

1) Eileen Duffy, a concert lyric soprano in New York City.

2) James Duffy (twin) and Michelle Duffy. Jim is an aerospace engineer in Fullerton, CA.

3) Christopher (twin) is a computer engineer in Boston, Massachusetts.

4) Patricia Duffy is with the state department and has been stationed in many exotic places in the world. At present, Patti is off to Africa.

Frances has lived in Claremont, CA. for the last 32 years where she works in the office of the district attorney for Los Angeles county. Upon retirement she promises family to spend at least three months each year in this area.

Arthur Henry Schairer and Willavi Ruzicka Schairer now live in Arizona after Arthur's colorful life took them to many places in the Pacific in his career as a construction engineer. Art and Willie raised a family of five children in such places as Borneo, Guam, Viet Nam, Manila and have now retired to the sunny climate of Casa Grande, Arizona. Their children are:

1) William Schairer

2) Gretchen Schairer

3) Ingrid Schairer Willhoite married to Raymond Willhoite and two children Justin Willhoite and Kristin Willhoite.

4) Louis Schairer

5) Paul Schairer

Agnes Claire Schairer Shriver (Twin) Agnes graduated from Marylhurst College in 1957 and joined the Women's Army Corp to serve at many army posts throughout the world. She saw duty at Fort Monmouth, NJ, Butte, Mont., Frankfurt, Germany and at the end of her twelve year service record, Agnes as Major Schairer served in the Office of the Director of the Women's Army Corps in the Pentagon. Here Agnes met Colonel Rowland (Ron) Shriver and when they were married she resigned

her commission to assume the role of wife and mother. Ron was a widower with three children and with the arrival of four more formed a lovely family of five girls and two boys.

The children of Agnes and Ron Shriver are:

1) Christine Shriver Stallwood and husband Phillip Stallwood, grandchildren, Stephen and Regan Stallwood.

2) Stephen Shriver and Andrea

3) Karen Shriver

4) Lisa Shriver (Twin)

5) Barbara Shriver (Twin)

6) Mark Shriver

7) Patricia Shriver

The Shrivvers live in Colorado Springs where Ron now retired from the army is a free lance photographer and Agnes creates beautiful pieces of furniture from various woods.

Ann Charlotte Schairer Potter

Ann was the only Schairer to remain in Astoria after education. She has held a twelve year position with First National Bank until her marriage to Tom Potter, an Astoria architect. Afterward was a bookkeeper for Bumble Bee while Tom was associated with Ernie and Ebba Brown architects. The Potters three daughters are:

1) Pauline (Polly) Potter

2) Catherine (Cathy) Potter

3) Jeanine Potter

The Potter family have lived the past year and a half in Phoenix, AZ. where Tom's work has taken them. While in Phoenix the girls attended grade and high school and Ann had an interesting position as bookkeeper for a fun foods company, a wholesaler for fast food chains and concessions. The Potters will return to their home in Astoria in July 1985.

JOHN WILLIAM ERICKSON (JOHNNY)

Johnny was born in California and came to Astoria as an infant with his family. He grew up in the florist

business helping Gus and Charlie even before his high school days. He served a short time in the army during World War I and returned to Astoria soon opening his own floral shop which he called Astoria Florists when he bought the former Hustwick shop. His sister Esther worked with him here for 35 years. He built the small greenhouse shop across from the St. Mary's Hospital which was most popular while the hospital remained across the street.

John married Frances Danielson of Astoria and the couple spent most of their lives here. John lived until February 22, 1947. He had no children.

VICTORIA MARIE ERICKSON LINK (TORY)

Victoria Link's first job after Astoria high school graduation was in the office of Troy Laundry. During the years after World War I many new citizens were added to the Astoria scene with young men coming to this area. Tory met Ross Link from North Dakota who had been stationed at Fort Lewis Washington and had become acquainted with Carl Nyquist of Astoria. Nyquist persuaded Link to come to Astoria after the war to work in the Nyquist Automobile business. Ross Link came to this community as chief mechanic for Nyquist Motor Co. and here met his wife, Victoria Erickson. The couple lived most of their lives in Astoria but for a short time in Tillamook where their daughter Virginia was born. After the death of her husband, Feb. 23, 1945, Victoria went to work in the sheriff's office at the County Court House and retired after 27 years and lives in Astoria where five of her six sisters reside.

Virginia Link McIntosh married Richard McIntosh and resides in Danville, CA. Their daughter:

1) Valerie McIntosh Sullivan married to Michael Sullivan of Astoria. The Sullivans live in Portland and have two



The ten adult Erickson children Front (L to R) John, Olga, Gus, Tory and Charley Back - Rose, Annie, Rudy, Esther and Freida

little ones: Ross and Nicole Sullivan.

RUDOLPH VICTOR ERICKSON (RUDY)

Rudy was the number seven child of Ole and Anna Erickson and his sisters agree he "was a fine florist." Rudy was under age for first world war and when quite young began to work in the Erickson shop after the older boys went off to war. Rudy, like Johnny, branched off into his own business after moving to Seattle and purchasing the Rainier Floral Company which he operated for many years.

Rudy married Elma Kennell and they have two children who are:

Robert Erickson whose wife is Clovia Wells Erickson of this city. Robert is business manager for the Clatsop Community College and he and Clovia have two children:

1) Kenneth Erickson a student of Clatsop College.

2) Kara Erickson an Astoria High School student.

LouAnn Erickson Powers of Seattle, WA, whose daughter lives in Astoria with her grandmother Elma Erickson

1) Jill Powers

Rudy lived in Seattle until his death in 1951.

ANNIE LENA CHRISTINA ERICKSON SMITH

Annie was born in the family home on Young's Bay and has lived in Astoria all of her life. From high school the Erickson Floral shop became her domain with brother Charlie. Annie inherited her mother's name and her love and ability for flower arranging. She seemed to have been born with a flower in her hand. She and Charlie made Erickson Florist what it is today. Annie



Anna Erickson with daughters Esther, Annie, Freida and Rosie on the front porch of the old homestead near the shore of Youngs Bay about where Astoria high school is today

met and married Sidney Starr Smith of Warrenton, a member of the early pioneer Smith family of Clatsop Plains. Sid's father was Starr Smith son of Silas and grandson of Solomon and Celiast (Helen) Smith. Sidney's great-great grandfather was Chief Cobaway who was leader of the Clatsop Indians at the time of the Lewis and Clark visit to Oregon. Sidney Smith was employed by Prouty Mill and later became custodian for Astoria High School and Central School. Their daughter Barbara Lewis and her husband Frank Lewis have two children:

1) Dr. Donald Lewis and wife Jan (Dr. Lewis is a dentist in Alburquerque,

NM), their children, Kendra Janine and Kelsey Ann.

2) Nancy Lewis Phillips, wife of Bruce Phillips, daughter Monica.

ESTHER MARTHA ERICKSON WALMAN

Esther spent 35 years in the florist business, first with brother Johnny and then with Charlie and Annie in Ericksons. Of course Esther took time out to "fall in love, marry Jesse Walman and have three wonderful children." After Jesse's untimely death in 1942, Esther went to work in the family business as she had three young children to take care of.

William (Bill) Walman began his career in the florist business following the Erickson tradition first in Astoria then in Nick's Florist Shop in Portland. Bill opened his own shop called Gateway Florist which he operated for ten years. After marriage to Audrey Basil, he sold his shop in Portland and moved to Sand Point, Idaho where he is employed in PP&L Company. At present Bill is office manager of the plant in Sand Point. He and Audrey have two daughters:

- 1) Peggy Walman
- 2) Kristin Walman

Marjorie Walman Brockey and husband Robert (Bob) Brockey live in Svensen. Bob was a Navy man stationed at Tongue Point when he met Marjorie, who was then a bank employee at

First National Bank. Afterward Marjorie became receptionist for Dr. Donald Kumpula, Optometrist, where she is well-known today. After Navy service Bob joined the service Department of Lum and Utti where he is body and fender specialist. The Brockey's have two married children:

1) Linda Brockey Franson whose husband is Michael Franson, live in Bandon, OR, where Michael is employed at the Bandon sawmill. Linda and Michael Franson have a son, Robert David Franson.

2) Robert Brockey (Bob) is a logger, a cutter, who loves his work according to his Grandmother Esther. Bob and his wife Marilyn Barendse Brockey live in Brownsmead and have an infant son Jesse Owen Brockey.

Ole Erickson celebrates his 90th birthday with six of his children. Charlie is on the right



Donald Walman (Don) and his wife, Sharyn live in Mt. Angel, OR and Don commutes to his construction engineering job in Oregon City. After high school Don worked at First National Bank just as his sister Margie did. He moved on to the First National in Portland where he met his wife, Sharyn Leo. At present Don and Sharyn have two children:

- 1) Steven Walman
- 2) Jill Walman

FREIDA STELLA CHARITY ERICKSON

Freida (Fritz) graduated from Astoria High and went to work for the Red Cross with Gena Dyer. In 1930 she and Allan Hulen, Director of FAA Federal Aviation Agency in Alaska, were married. Later Allan became assistant administrator for FAA for Africa, Europe and the Middle East and the Hulens lived throughout Europe. When DeGaulle sent NATO out of France the FAA headquarters was moved to Brussels, Belgium and attached to the American embassy there.

The Hulens have one son, Allan Douglas, who was born in Anchorage, Alaska and makes his home there where he is now manager for General Motors Company.

Doug is married to Helen Peck Hulen and they have a family of three children:

- 1) Darrell Allan Hulen and wife Page Myre Hulen and son Allan Derek.
- 2) Debra Hulen
- 3) Barbara Ann Hulen Kinsey and Rich Ashton Kinsey

After seven years in the European countries Allan and Freida retired to Sun City, AZ., where Allan passed away April 23, 1973 and Freida spends her time between Sun City, Astoria and Anchorage with her children.

ROSE LILY ELIZABETH ERICKSON SPEKE is also a complete Astorian having spent most of her life here. After High School she worked

with Johnny and Esther at Astoria Florists until her mother, Anna, died leaving Rosie to care for "Papa Ole." Arthur Leonard Speke born in Wales of a Welsh mother and English father travelled the world over in his various occupations. As an US Army man he left Australia during World War II for other South Pacific ports as ship's engineer in the US Maritime Service. After visiting Philippines, Okinawa, Japan, he came into San Francisco and finally up to Portland, Oregon to meet his future wife, Rose Erickson who happened to be visiting in Portland. Still in uniform in 1947, Arthur Speke and Rose were married. Choosing to pursue his father's career as horticulturist and landscaper, he attended the University of Washington's landscape and horticulture course. Art's father had been landscaper for the Kew Gardens in London, England. Rose and Art settled in Astoria in a field of work they both knew and loved. Rose became a partner in the designing for the landscape business and a good number of landscaped areas in the community are products of this partnership. Retired now, the couple enjoy the perfectly manicured beauty of their own yard and garden. Art Speke, however, admits to keeping his "Green Thumb" in the Landscape art by advising different church gardeners in the Astoria area.

The six Erickson daughters live comfortably each still enjoying their gardens and each other. The five who live in Astoria: Olga, Victoria, Annie, Esther and Rose meet at least once a week for visiting and when Freida comes there is a real celebration. February 24, 1985 was an occasion for celebration when Olga Schairer, eldest sister, became 90 years young. Like her father, Ole, her many friends came to wish her well on her birthday and children and grandchildren travelled from many states to help with the festivities.



Ole Erickson on his 90th birthday



Two views of Charlie Holman's 1924 33' gillnetter with a self-bailing bow. The building below is the Haines crab cannery at Warrenton.



SCHOOL BOY ON THE COLUMBIA RIVER

by W. Wm. Puustinen

When Ed Niska asked me to write the story of the fierce night with Charley Holm on the Lower Columbia in May of 1926, I sat down and wrote that item out in one sitting just as I remember it. But later that night, as many unmentioned details came back to mind, I realized that I was perhaps taking far too many things for granted among those who might read this detail and who have perhaps never been in rough seas. Therefore, I'm now writing this section in an effort to explain some situations, circumstances, results and emotions one needs to understand before really being able to appreciate the stories of lower Columbia fishermen. I know old seamen will understand.

—o—

Before my time on the Columbia, gillnetting was done from sailing boats when there were no engines yet. These boats were 24 to 26 feet long, wide of beam and open from bows to stern. The main mast was set up in the bow thus leaving no place for any cabin, for the mast had to be raised from its chocks in the boat by both men, captain and boat-puller. The toe of the mast, which was heavy and strong like a short telephone pole, first had to be stepped into its toe seating in the bottom of the bow, right under the iron collar clamp which was then used to lock the mast upright

against its cove in the curve of the bow decking, what there was of it, about three feet from the bow stem inwards.

Almost all Columbia fishing sails were sprit sail, almost triangular in shape except for the sprit extension out from the tip of the mast, which extension of sail was held out by the sprit boom. The sprit boom was lighter wood with its upper tip fitting into a strong rope loop at the sprit point of the sail and with the boom's lower end fitting into a like rope loop down on the mast a short distance above the main boom which held out the outer tip of the sail's lower edge when all sailing gear was out and set for sailing.

Rope lines from the main boom gave the helmsman in the stern of the boat control of the angle of the sail for taking the wind for maximum drive to the boat forward even when the wind came from the side of the boat under sail. The steering was done mostly, of course, by a large wooden rudder held overboard in the stern by iron fittings on both, rudder and the stern. Amidships of the boat was a long flat "well" through the boat's bottom. This well held the centerboard, a short plank which was dropped by an iron lever up in the boat and hinged to the centerboard, so that when the center board was dropped below the keel line of the boat it acted

like a large wooden knife cutting through the water endwise as the boat moved ahead under sail. This center-board gave better forward control in sailing by preventing the sail from shoving the boat too much sideways when the wind was from the side of the boat's course. A good sailor could thus maneuver a well built sailing boat to "tack" by angled sailing even right into the wind direction.

Sailing boats had two men, the captain or owner or renter of the boat, and his "boatpuller" or one-man crew. The captain generally owned the boat and net, or rented it from the cannery. The boatpuller took orders and supplied the extra manpower. When there was no wind for sailing it was the duty of the boatpuller to row the boat with long oars sometimes up to twelve feet in length. Thus the "boatpuller" term came into use.

Most sailing boat fishing was done during the slow and slack tide periods around low water and high water slacks. Strong ebb tides were generally waited out at anchor along the shore or below some shallow like Desdemona Sands, Taylor Sands and Seal Channel sands. Meals were cooked and eaten while at anchor. Cooking was done over small woodburning stoves in early sailing days. When there was any sleeping it was under a tent formed by the sail being held up in part by the sprit boom or by an oar. One didn't have to dust off his bedding under such a tent during rainstorms.

Many are the stories of shipwrecks of these sailing boats. Often the heavy swells whipped the boat so viciously that the whole mast broke loose and fell down and often cracked the boat's side when the mast struck. There wasn't much chance then from saving the boat if the side was cracked open down to below water line.

Many boats, even under short sail often capsized and the men drowned

unless another luckier boat happened by in time. There are old stories of some "24 to 28" sailing boats capsizing and their crews drowning in one night in the early sailing years in the worst storm disaster of the early Columbia sailing time fishing. I would not know how accurate that story is. I was not there then. I know only about fishing when I came on to the scene first during World War I, when I went out and pulled boat for the first engine-powered boats.

I did fish out of a fourteen-foot skiff built for me by Knuuti Pesonen who lived in Uniontown above Taylors Avenue above the present Thunderbird buildings line. Pesonen no longer used his sail so he gave it to me and I learned to sail that skiff even down to green sturgeon fishing with eighty fathoms of net off Hammond. I didn't make much money in green sturgeon as Pesonen and his boatpuller had thought I would. They fished a regular full gillnet from Desdemona Lighthouse down and they anchored in the quiet water inside Jetty Sands bay when not drifting. That's where I, too, anchored and listened and learned from scores of old fishermen anchored all around. Sure, I already wore my white navy sailor's hat in good weather. It was my pride and joy, fish or no fish.

When the green sturgeon fishing didn't pay enough down river I told Pesonen "To hell with this. I'm going back above Tongue Point to fish for white sturgeon there." I hoisted sail and away I went on a good nor'wester and flood tide. That day was nice and sunny in some year after the war. It wasn't too long when I sailed around Tongue Point and came upon a whole small flotilla of row boats all over the water in the bay above the Tongue. There were as many as four neatly dressed men in the larger rowboats. Many had clipboards, paper pads, pencils and other stuff in their hands. Some

were sounding the depth of the bay and setting out small buoys. I didn't know what was going on so I slipped my sail line and let the boat drift closer to the rowboats, to watch.

Curiosity got the best of me after a bit so I called to the nearest four-man boat and asked, "What are you guys doing here?"

The most important looking man on board, with a big clipboard laying on his arm, looked at me a moment and then in real official tones and loud voice said, "Well, lad. Don't you know that this is going to be the world renowned Tongue Point Naval Base?" That did stump me, but not for long. His too masterful tones irked me. So I yanked another hitch down on my cocked sailor hat, pulled my sail to full set and shot right back. "Yeah? — And I guess this is your damned Navy, too!" You could hear the roar of laughter all over the bay from all of the other boats as I pick-

ed up speed with the wind. So, I did have a bit of juvenile learning even of sailing.

However the real Columbia bar fishing came into my experience first when I signed on as boat puller for Axel Berg. I wanted to earn money to go to University of Oregon then so after a winter of fur trapping in the mountains from Svensen to Nehalem and the Klaskanine, I wanted to go fishing with a real good captain. On the long trapline I was toughened enough that I felt able to measure up to any gillnet job. So at Union Cannery I asked about the best fishing captain and soon learned that Axel Berg was the top man on the whole Columbia in those years. So Axel Berg it was whom I went to see.

Holy Cow! When I found Axel he was working on the most beautiful white boat I had ever seen. This boat was 29 feet long with the usual focsle cabin up forward and the gillnet cockpit in the

Axel Berg and Jack Karna, boatpuller, in 1921. The boat was built in 1916 for Joe Juhani Karhansaari by Kivijarvi. Karnes was Joe's original boat puller and then went along with Axel when he got the boat



stern. She had a double cylinder Standard engine of ten horse power. Her decks were of alternate white and red cedar stripping tightly bound under heavy clear varnish like a sheet of glass. Man! Did I want to pull for this guy! So, I asked the painting man if he already had a boatpuller.

"Yes. I should have the same boatpuller I had last year. But he is in Indiana now and he really hasn't let me know for sure if he wants to come this year." Even on that chance I asked if Axel would give the chance if his former man didn't show up. It was a lucky move for me. I did get the job by time the May season opened.

First thing Axel asked me was, "What do you think about fishing over the spit?" I had heard stories about the rough fishing over Peacock Spit but knew nothing about it myself yet. But I was soon to learn.

As soon as Axel found I could satisfactorily handle the net in the river

he asked me if I would go over the spit. I said I would. If other men could do that I figured I could, too. But figuring is one thing. Actual experience is another.

In 1925 there were no main river dams yet on the upper Columbia and the spring freshets came roaring down and tumbled into the ocean with violent force, especially on the times of ten-foot high tides and over two-foot minus tides, with over 12-foot drop in the tide at the bar.

First time we laid our net to go over Peacock Spit was on a clear day with just a light northwester blowing at daybreak as we eased down to the bar off the tip of the North Jetty. My belly began to feel some strange sensations as we climbed the big channel rollers of the minus tide. Axel got the eighteen foot long spit flags ready and soon had one tied to the north end buoy of the net. We still dropped farther seaward, past the first black can below the North Jetty tip, and then past the second black

Bill Puustinen at age 79 out gillnetting on the Columbia river



can swinging wildly in the strong ebb tide. Slowly and carefully Axel maneuvered his gleaming white boat nearer the breakers throwing high smoking veils of spray high on the wings of the northwest wind. It was an awesome sight to see for the first time from the seemingly insignificant small boat we were in.

I don't know how high those breakers were rolling up the spit in their truly majestic white thunder and power. They looked like small living mountains. Finally Axel turned our boat back south from the breakers and told me to throw the buoys over. The net then had to be let go out in wild rushes between the pull of each roller. Those times I just stayed clear of everything, far on my side of the net cockpit as the net flew out of the boat. Only in the brief slackening of the ocean's pull did I get a chance to grab hold of the cork line and quickly flop the lines clear of fouls as far as I could. If the fouls didn't clear then there was no other chance. They had to go on overboard.

While laying the net out into the strong current suction over Peacock Spit Axel warned me to be careful of getting my hands or clothing fouled in any quick-whipping bight of the net or I'd go overboard myself with the net. Then he told me what happened to his former boatpuller one time in this same laying of the net into the surf.

The former boatpuller was a 245-pound former longshoreman. Axel said he was very strong. He could pull hard enough on the net in clearing out the fouls between the swells, for long distances from the boat. Those times you pulled on the corkline with all your whole back strength to tighten the momentarily loosened corkline and then flip it left or right to clear off the fouled leadline. This one time Axel said he looked back from his check of the swells ahead and saw blood flying from his partner's hand as he was flopping



Axel Berg, right, with unidentified man, works at the Union Fish net racks

the corkline over.

"What's the matter with your hand?" Axel said he yelled. Then his partner looked at his own hand and found that he was missing his middle finger torn clear off and gone by the terrific cutting strain of the net under the pull of the giant rollers of the sea. I sure remembered that verbal warning real well. A twenty foot high ocean swell moving ahead at fifty miles an hour was the terrific force of hundreds of thousands of horsepower which don't stop for swearing nor praying. And a mere twenty-foot swell looks as if it was sixty.

Sometimes after we had the net out with flags on both ends disappearing into the Spit breakers, we would have to go down the ship channel almost two thirds way to the Lightship before we could get safely around the outer edge of Peacock Spit and turn north to begin looking for some sign of our net's flags showing on top of the ocean swells north

of Peacock. Many times I've seen ocean ships disappear almost to their mast tops behind the bar rollers on strong minus tides we went out on to go looking for our net, north. One time we never found Axel's net until about four o'clock in the afternoon off Long Beach, Washington. Another time the current was not strong enough anymore to take our net clean out of the surf and the flood tide began taking it toward the beach under the Cape. We had to go into the actual first line of surf to get that net.

If a land person has never been in rough water he cannot even imagine the force of the sea. When I fished with Axel Berg we were often the only ones putting our net over the Spit. Other times there were perhaps as many as

two dozen boats cracking the Spit for the first fish of a salmon run heading for Columbia spawning rounds.

It was on the rougher trips out when I came in black, blue, yellow and green-spotted sometimes from heels to shoulders on both sides. And I cannot remember on those bar crossings where nor by what I got those bruises. But one surely got slammed against the boat hard, especially in the tricky cross swells when the channel swells rolled thirty feet high from the southwest and a stiff nor'wester cut smoking curlers across the ridges of the channel swells. One felt pretty small and insignificant in those conditions. You felt like you were leaving your guts up in the clouds when you started down the long slopes of those thirty footers. And they looked like 300 yards between crests, and a mile long.

Charlie Holman



Once with Charley Holm, going out to fish crabs, I was baiting up bait bags with clams while standing down in Charley's fish locker just forward of his cabin. It was not a rough morning but there was always some sneakers and still bad swells to look out for. I was bent down in the locker when Charley yelled, "Look out, Bill!" I had time to look seaward and I saw a solid green wall of water coming up to break over our bows. That wall of green was not over four feet high above the bows. I just had time to drop the bait bag and grab a breath of air and handholds under the locker inside rims and bury my head hard against the curve of the forward wall of the cabin above the fish locker when that one swept in over the whole boat. But even with my body hard pressed against the boat that four-foot wall of water nearly broke my back, the way it felt. The crash of it also drove all the air out of my lungs as if it was cracking my ribs also. It was this terrific force of fast rushing swells which can kill one by crushing him

against a hard obstacle. Or it can rip you loose into the sea, or squeeze the air out of your lungs so that in your reaction and panic you will then drown by taking in lungs full of water. It can be anything but funny.

This is why I had to write this introductory before you can appreciate the night I spent with Charley Holm in 1926. Then, just use your own imagination to try to picture the circumstances

and the feelings of those fishermen of the Columbia bar who, like George Haggren, and scores of others, never came home but went on into eternity. Axel Berg himself took that last trip out, together with his son, Thorsten, just a few years after I had fished with him. I have to wonder, for what reason have the powers that prevail over us saved me. Have I yet some unfinished mission to perform?

Bill Puustinen gillnetting on the Columbia River at the age of 79.





Axel Berg and son Thorsten in 1936

ABOUT AXEL BERG

by Hjordis Brown

It was with great pleasure that I accepted Ed Niska's invitation to give a few words about my father Axel Berg's life as a fisherman.

My earliest recollections of my father Axel Berg being in the fishing industry was when I was about four years old. What I remember is Dad getting ready to go on a week's fishing trip and mother and I were busy filling a ten gallon metal container with food for the week.

However I recall Dad mentioning that he came to Astoria from Finland at the age of 16, which would be about 1914 and his early days of fishing on the Columbia River was in a sailboat. I don't recall what year he got his own boat but I know it was fun to be able to go out fishing with him and the cabin of the boat intrigued me. I know I tried to straighten out things in the cabin like playing house.

I wish I could remember what year it was that there was so much fish in the river because I can remember Dad saying he had to quit taking any more fish aboard in order not to swamp the boat. Those days it seems to me the fish were much larger on the average than now-a-days. I loved fish in those days and it still is my favorite food.

Then about 1930 or thereabouts Dad

decided to go crabbing. He went into business with Albert Swanson of Warrenton. I was their secretary more or less as they shipped crab all over. They dissolved their partnership about the time my brother Thorsten finished the 8th grade and since he was not planning to go onto high school Dad hired him as a boat puller. Mother felt sorry for Thorsten who had to get up so early in the morning to go crabbing so she would get up and make hot chocolate for him before he left. I helped out by making bait bags and Dad paid me 10c a bag. I really enjoyed making them besides I felt I was helping my dad so that he wouldn't have to get up early before going out crabbing to make a few bags.

It was the morning of the 5th of February in 1938 that we received the sad news from the Coast Guard that our dad's boat had capsized due to a freak storm that came up all of a sudden while they were picking up their crab pots. Brother Thorsten's body was recovered but not my dad's. The wheel of his boat was recovered and is now on the wall about the fireplace of Mrs. Jack Pietarila who lives in New Milford, Connecticut. She is a granddaughter. If things had to turn out as they did I believe my dad departed as a true lover of the sea would want to.



OUR CELESTIA ANN

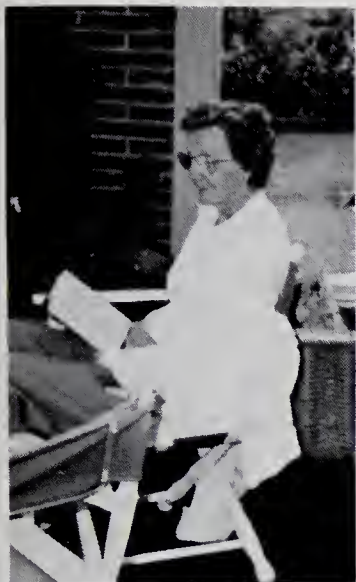
She sat in her antique chair,
The storms and the sorrows of life
Have left but little trace,
The glow of faith within
Has glorified her face.

She is surrounded by things of other days,
The nine-day clock upon the wall
Has ticked all time away,
The Franklin stove given cheer,
Much warmth and golden rays.

Her hands not folded in her lap,
But weaving life's memories in a rug,
Her mind alert, thinking of things apart,
Joys, sorrows and the tears;

Perhaps the patter of baby feet
Upon her heart,
Our Celestia Ann reliving
The life of giving
For near one hundred and five years.

Dr. Nellie Byrd
Portland, Oregon



Agnes Gearhart Garner



Marjorie Gearhart Boehm Jean Gearhart Sandoz

CELESTIA ANN "LETTIE" NEAL GEARHART

Dec. 31, 1848 - Dec. 22, 1952

by Agnes Gearhart Garner
Jean Gearhart Sandoz
Marjorie Gearhart Boehm

For some time, the grandchildren of Celestia Ann Gearhart, have felt that something should be written about the life of Grandmother Gearhart as she was special to us and a unique lady. I, Agnes, asked the grandchildren to each send notes on their remembrances of Grandmother. I was also fortunate to find and make notes from Mary Neal's diary for the years of 1867, 1868 and 1869. Mary Neal was Grandmother's sister. So from old newspaper clippings, letters and such we have come up with the following.

—o—

Celestia Ann Neal was born December 31, 1848, to William Clark Neal and Lydia Annie Sager Neal in Orwell, Ashtabula County, Ohio in a log cabin. She was the third child. There were two sisters older and in time two

sisters and a brother younger. The sisters and brother were: Mary Alma born Dec. 1, 1844; Candace Almina born May 5, 1847; Celestia Ann born Dec. 31, 1848; Harriet Rebecca born Jan. 22, 1851; Clarinda Alice born June 7, 1853; and John Henry born Aug. 6, 1857.

One of the younger children could not say Celestia and it came out "Lettie". She was called Lettie the rest of her life.

On Dec. 17, 1859, Lettie's father's personal property was sold at a sheriff's sale in Orwell, Ohio and he took off they knew not where. When he left, Mary was 15 years old and John Henry was 2 years, 4 months. Lettie was almost 11 years old.

On February 18, 1863 the Neal children last saw their mother. Quote from Mary's diary, "She left home to have a surgical operation performed,



Young Lettie Neal

and after 5 weeks of intense suffering, died away from home on March 22, 1863." Lettie was 15.

Lettie remembered cannons firing during Morgan's raid in Ohio during the Civil War. President Lincoln's assassination was terrible news in 1865.

Lettie lived around Ohio with different relatives and attended school until she was 17 at which time she went west to Iowa to make her home with her father's brother, Uncle Henry G. Neal and to teach school. She arrived in Davenport, Iowa on Oct. 4, 1866 in the company of Mr. and Mrs. Erastus Muffet. Her sister Mary had come west to Uncle Henry's a year earlier.

On May 11, 1867 her Uncle Henry rented his home in Davenport and moved to a 10 acre farm at Jersey Ridge, which he bought for \$1800. Jersey Ridge is 10 miles from Davenport.

During 1867 and 1868 Lettie taught in five different schools in the county. Her

highest salary during this period was \$30 a month. Her board ran around \$10 a month.

Lettie and her sister Mary would teach in different schools in the county and board near their schools. They would, every week or so, meet in Davenport or Jersey Ridge at Uncle Henry's for a visit. For these visits they would often walk as far as 10 miles if they did not catch a ride with a neighbor or Uncle Henry's transportation was not available. When they met in Davenport they would just walk the streets so they could visit in private.

Lettie's birthday, Dec. 31 and New Years Day were special times for visiting each other and with socializing with neighbor folk, when they enjoyed music and song, pies and cakes. On New Years Day 1867 Mary and Lettie rode with Mr. H.G. Vinales to Uncle Henry's in the little wagon. "We got quite cold as the temperature was 7 degrees below at sunrise that morning." Quote from Mary's diary.

On Lettie's 20th birthday, Dec. 31, 1868, Mary Neal notes in her diary that Lettie went over to the poor house and brought a young lady home to Uncle Henry's with her.

Time at Uncle Henry's was spent sewing, making a new cotton mattress, a new delaine dress for Lettie, helping with house work and cooking and visiting and studying. In one instance Mary said Lettie was studying mental arithmetic. Lectures at the local theater and hall and the Scott County Fair were special events to attend besides Teachers Institute in Davenport.

Since the Neal children were left more or less to take care of themselves at an early age, they all helped each other, both spiritually and financially. Mary and Lettie heard from their father occasionally. He usually wanted a favor, mostly money. They did not

have money to give as they were helping relatives with the support of their younger sisters and brother.

Mary Neal married Moses Morgan at Uncle Henry Neal's home in Jersey Ridge Aug. 18, 1869 and moved to California taking the brother, John Henry with her.

Lettie continued teaching and going to school in Iowa and was able to work her way through Ames Agricultural College, now Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, and graduated in 1875. For many years she was the oldest living graduate of that school.

The following letter from Lettie to her sister, Rebecca, from Ames Agricultural College tells something of her college life. April 13, 1873. "Dear Becca, You see I have been directed in the paths of this institution again. I came in two weeks late. I spent two weeks at Uncle Henry's visiting and getting some sewing done. Alice (Neal, her sister) was there the last week. I make a delaine or worsted and a calico dress and a large apron to work in. They say I look best in 'it. I stopped in Wheatland on the way to Ames. So many wanted me to teach."

"The college is full. There are 280 students. I am studying physics, botany, English, literature and trigonometry. I wish I had some maple sugar."

"I anticipate a pleasant year even though my masculine friend is not here. I get a good long letter from him frequently. I expect you to keep silent regarding my masculine friend.

"Student prayer meetings Sunday evenings are excellent this year. Last night I had an oration in Society and next Saturday am on for debate and the one following I have a 'budget box'. Send me something for this."

"I have not heard from Father in a long time. I am living with Mrs. Lyman."

"I must close and go for a walk. I have hardly been outdoors this week."

Lettie's sister, Candace Neal, went to Oregon Territory in 1867 with a Mr. and Mrs. Sidney H. Marsh, who founded Pacific Academy in Forest Grove, Oregon. Candace lived with the Marshs and sent to school and graduated from Pacific Academy. She married Henry B. Luce in Forest Grove, later moving to Hillsboro, Oregon. Candace knew the opportunities for educated women in the West, so urged Lettie to come to Oregon.

Lettie heeded Candace's call and came West in 1878. She traveled by train to San Francisco, chair car all the way as a sleeper cost \$15 extra; then by steamer, the George W. Elder, to Portland (she was very seasick), and by 'an old plug railroad' 18 miles to Forest Grove, where she made her home with sister Candace and her family. Lettie mentions in letters that she dreaded go-

John Wesley Gearhart, son of Philip and Margaret



ing among strangers. I, granddaughter, Agnes, wonder how she had nerve enough to make this trip alone.

The school year of 1878-79 Lettie taught in Astoria. Her salary was \$50. a month and she paid \$1. a day for board.

Letter from Lettie to her sister Rebecca, Mar. 13, 1879 from Astoria. "Dear Becca, I can not begin to tell you how much I enjoyed my vacation with friends and family in Hillsboro until I got "frozen up" there. I worried so much about getting back and losing my position that it came near spoiling all my fun. I finally got back here after having lost just 6 days of school."

"Three more months of school and then back to Hillsboro for vacation. I presume I can have the school here again without doubt. I sometimes think I will apply in Portland and have a better school house and be closer to home and then I dread getting acquainted in a new place and school."

"The weather here is rain, rain, but I am glad to be away from the cold winter."

"I have been substitute for the teacher in the Presbyterian Sunday school. I hope to get back to the Bible class, which I enjoy. I have enjoyed the winter and have made several pleasant acquaintances. My work does not tire me as it did last winter. I feel I am getting behind the times since you and Alice have gotten watches. I am trying to save \$200 this year. I have \$145. deposited.

"I had Alice make me a black cashmere and velvet dress with sleeveless jacket. She made it to fit herself and it fits me completely. I am being teased about a widower, a wee Scotsman I can't bear. The principal said "I know someone who has his eye on you, but I am not going to tell you for I want you to teach next year. He is no widower. Probably an old foggy like myself. I wish money came easier so you could come visit and I could go to

Uncle David's golden wedding anniversary."

When Lettie moved to Iowa she united with the Christian Church in Davenport by letter from the Franklin Street Church of Cleveland, Ohio. While in Iowa she apparently joined the Disciples Church, which was her Uncle Henry's church, and she was disappointed there were no Disciples churches in Oregon. After moving to Astoria she soon joined the Presbyterian Church and was a member the rest of her life. Activity in church was a major part of her life — teaching Sunday school, attending Bible class, etc.

Lettie married John Wesley Gearhart of Astoria, son of one of the oldest families of Clatsop County, at her sister Candace Luce's home in Hillsboro, Oregon Nov. 6, 1879.

From a letter Candace Luce to her brother-in-law, Moses Morgan, Nov. 1879: "Lettie was married Nov. 6, 1879 to John W. Gearhart of Astoria. He is a bachelor, ten years older than Lettie. He has a well established grocery business in Astoria and property besides. I have only met her husband twice but I like his appearance very well and think he will make a kind husband. They went to The Dalles for their wedding trip."

"They had set their wedding day for Sept. 16 but had to postpone it because of her (Lettie's) sickness. She was very sick and the doctor was very uneasy about her and we were afraid she would never be any better. Lettie will have a nice home to begin housekeeping in."

The John Gearhart's first home in Astoria was on Third street, between Bond and Commercial. The grocery business which John owned proved profitable enough for them to build a large home at Grand and Eighth in 1868. The business was wholesale and retail dealer in groceries, provisions and feed, located at the corner of Benton and Chenamus Streets in Astoria.

A description of the new home and moving there by Lettie's 16 year old niece, Clara Morgan (Long) in a letter to her father, Moses Morgan, follows: Astoria, Oregon, Sept. 22, 1886 "Dear Father, They (the Gearharts) are moving a little at a time. They expected to move in today, but it has been raining all day. The house is up a steep hill and the road has to be dry or it will be so slippery they cannot get up. Their house is real nice and on the hill where they have a lovely view of the river and the town. The house is square and plain, but it is well built and well finished. The rooms below plastered and all but the parlor have wainscoting, hard oiled finished. The plaster has black sand mixed in the effect is very pretty. They have plenty of room, light and sunshine. The water is brought to the kitchen and

bathroom in pipes. They have nice furniture and nice carpets in the rooms." (Note: Clara was living with the Gearharts at this time.)

Between 1880 and 1887 John and Lettie had four children. The first born was John Neal born Dec. 2, 1880, then Edgar Garfield born March 25, 1883; next Philip E., born Feb. 8, 1885, and last, Esther born Sept. 12, 1887.

A letter written by Lettie to her niece, Clara Morgan, tells of Lettie's summer of 1888. Astoria, Sept. 8, 1888. "Dear Clara, We went to the farm at Clatsop May 9th and have just returned. Help was hard to get so I worked harder than was good for my health or disposition, one or the other. The children were happy on the farm. They all had the measles."

"We enjoyed buggy rides until the

Mr. and Mrs. John W. Gearhart and family stand in front of the old Gearhart home at 8th and Grand in Astoria. The house was built in 1868.



dust got too bad. We have sold the farm and are glad to be rid of the burden of it."

"I sometimes think I ought to send Neal to school, but I hate so to start him unless the school is extra good. One has so many interruptions when trying to teach at home. I have help now and can teach him, only it is by spells that he takes to it. We had the house painted outside and oiled inside over the summer. It seemed like a new home after the shabby one at the farm. I have not started into WCTU work yet. I had an invitation to teach Sunday school when there today. When rested and some of the hurrying work is done I will try it."

From son Neal's memoirs: "They (the Gearharts) took a trip to Ohio and Iowa in 1889. On the way Mother (Lettie) got the grippe and had to stay in Cleveland, Ohio about a month before

she was able to move to her sisters in Traer, Iowa. Father brought myself (Neal) and Edgar on home ahead of Mother and we lived with Aunt Maggie Butterfield on Clatsop Plains, where I started school."

In the early spring of 1892 Lettie's father, Wm. Clark Neal, wrote from sister Alice Neal Gregg's in Traer, Iowa that he was not well and that he was dependent on his children for money. Lettie's brother, John Neal, sent for their father and he lived with John at Diamond in Eastern Oregon for several months. With failing health he moved to Lettie's to be cared for until he died Oct. 24, 1892. Granddaughter, Hazel Gearhart, remembers Lettie saying she was not at all happy about her father coming to be cared for. (Who could blame her, as he had deserted the family when Lettie was 10.)

Jean and Marge Gearhart with Kenneth Casey. The old McClure school is in the left background.



From Neal's memoirs: "The family spent the winter of 1893 going to California. I attended private school in Santa Rosa." During this time Lettie's husband was being treated for mental illness in a hospital in San Francisco.

Lettie's husband, John Wesley, died by drowning Sept. 18, 1894. He was 56 years old. He left four children ages 7 years to 13 years for Lettie to raise by herself.

Lettie sent her children to spend part of the summer vacations with Aunt Maggie Butterfield or Aunt Sarah Byrd on Clatsop Plains or Aunt Lizzie Stout in Ilwaco, Washington. This did not always make her sister-in-laws too happy.

From a letter from Lettie to niece, Clara Morgan Long, July 7, 1897: "I have sent Philip and Esther by themselves in care of the Captain by boat to Aunt Sarah Byrds. Neal is working in the cannery. She, Laura (Luce, a niece) is with me, working in the cannery. She will do real well if the run of salmon continues good during the season. They are paying better for labeling than last year. Edgar has promise of going to Candace's (Luce) this vacation.

Revival meetings and Bible school after, in the spring, dragged my house cleaning along. I am about through now. I had a grand rush to get Esther patched and an ironclad apron made for her to tear around in at Aunt Sarah's."

Lettie took an interest in many things and wrote numerous articles for the newspapers, protesting or recommending. "How to Keep Children Off the Streets" "That Liquor License", "How to Have a Cleaner City", and "Those Pesty Weeds" were just a few that she wrote about with feeling. She was secretary of a committee endeavoring to form a Clatsop County Board of

Charities (Dec. 1897) and presented an extensive paper explaining the function of a Board of Charities. The paper was published in its entirety in the Astorian. She was treasurer of the Presbyterian Church in Astoria for seven years and was custodian of the funds that built the present church. She was a charter member of the Anniversary Club and the Quilting Club connected with the church. She spent hours sewing those tiny stitches in quilts stretched on a wooden frame which was made by her son, Edgar. Those meetings were held in the church parlor.

Lettie had a secret hiding place behind the books in her bookshelf at home where she hid quilting club money or other monies that she was in charge of collecting.

Lettie retained an interest in the schools and for a time was deputy county superintendent of schools in Clatsop county. Son Neal told that Tillie Anderson from Ilwaco took care of the children during this time, and that his father drove his mother in the buggy to visit the various schools of the county as was required of the superintendent. Lettie told that Dora Badolett, who taught school in Clatsop County 50 years, once said at a time of crisis in the schools during Lettie's absence on a trip to Ohio, "Well, if Mrs. Gearhart were here, we could straighten everything out."

Lettie was one of the hostesses for the State of Oregon at the Alaska-Yukon Exposition in Seattle in 1909. When asked about this honor she was quoted as saying, "Oh, that was nothing."

Lettie's broad interest included prominent contemporary people. She left extensive notes on the characteristics and doctrines of Mahatma Gandhi. In her desk was a letter from Lowell Thomas dated Aug. 3, 1950, thanking her for her fine letter and stating that he was quite recovered from his Tibetan accident and that there would

be a book about his Tibetan trip in the fall.

Beginning in 1902 Lettie was active in a reading club for many years. The club members were outstanding women of Astoria. They studied history and prominent authors and had open meetings with prominent people to lecture or entertain.

Besides quilting, Lettie loved to tat and made some lovely lacy doilies and such. She continued quilting until she was well past 80 years of age. When her

sight began to fail, she took up braiding wool rugs to keep her hands and mind busy. Before she died she made 34 rugs; one for each of her nine grandchildren and others for special friends and for her home. Her daughter, Esther, helped with the colors, assembling the wool and threading the needles after she became practically blind. With this help she continued rug-making until more than 100 years of age.

To be concluded in the next issue

THE OLD RAIL FENCE

Gone, the old rail fence that lined the road
The horse and buggies, and wagon load.
Gone, the fence that set the fields apart
No, not modern, but primitive art.
Gone, the fence that kept the cows at bay
From the gardens and orchards away.
Gone, the corn huskings, and quilting bee

For all things quite new to you and me.
The fence's top rail we walked alone
At the very risk of life and bone
And one corner was our house of play
We built with boards we found astray.
Cupboards of boxes we made ourselves
Held the broken dishes on the shelves.

In our house we had our rag dolls there
Playing make believe motherly care.
There were no factory dolls for us
We made our rag dolls with little fuss
Corncobs pencil faced were our dolls, too
Letting imagination have its due.
And now the old fence is lost to view

For everything now is so new
Now the highway is boss of the road,
With its autos and the trucksters' load
Tooting the cows and horses away
Saying, "Goose I'm boss of the day."
Even now at four score years and more
We love to think of the things of yore.

By Celestia A. Gearhart
December 1945

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